

accepting the invalid's estimate of the medicine supplied him—he, on the other hand, does not entirely agree with this verdict, and even hints that Mr. Black, if harmless and well-intentioned, is dull at times, and repeats himself *ad nauseam*. We need not give any detailed account of the story now before us, as most of our readers will have seen at any rate parts of it in the weekly or fortnightly stolen screeds that have appeared any time the last six months in the *Globe*, and have represented that advanced journal's sole homage to literature. One good point may as well be noted at once. Mr. Black has fairly warned all the world in his title page that this is to be another nautical romance where the initiated may expect to meet any number of miraculously beautiful sunsets, brooding over any quantity of olive-green rocks, and where any number of absurd Highlandmen will talk about feeling 'ferry well whatever,' and ask why you did not comply with their 'when I wass call you.' The initiated will not be disappointed in this point, and we can promise them a fine old Laird thrown in, who tells idiotic tales and chuckles over them in the most annoying manner, but with whom you cannot get seriously angry because he candidly admits that the humour of these anecdotes depends almost entirely on the dialect in which they are couched. Without pretending to gauge the exact amount of wit a peculiar *patois* can instil into a tale, we may fairly admit that these eternal reminiscences of Homesh possess no humour in any other aspect. Then the principal characters are always singing, often in Gaelic, and their *répertoire* is limited to a very few ballads, which we are generally regaled with at full length. Add to all this, the crowning misery of having to listen to a tale nearly all told in the shape of questions, and the idea of discomfort is complete. According to this chaste and simple method the commonplace sentence, 'She came up the companion-way' is etherealised into 'But who is this coming up the companion-way?' and the verbless phrases, 'But this sudden sound of oars?' and the slight shock against 'the side of the vessel?' are supposed to have a nameless charm that far exalts them over the usual stale and mundane methods of announcing the approach of a boat. In this particular we must admit that Mr. Black can quote the authority of a greater

man than himself, we mean Mr. Robert Browning, in whose 'Balaustion's Adventure,' we are sorry to say, the same interrogative form of giving a fact appears more than once (e.g.)

'Round we rushed,—
'What hung behind us but a pirate ship
'Panting for the good prize?'

Then again we have slowly acquired an undying hatred for the stock character of Queen T. who has done duty in so many of Mr. Black's novels. We inwardly rebel and cannot away with her tricks and her manners. This introduction of your old characters into your new books is a favourite game with some novelists, who seem to think that, by harping long enough on one personality, a strong belief in its existence can be evoked. With a low bow of apology for mentioning him in such company, we would refer to the wonderfully minute skill with which Thackeray added to the *vraisemblance* of his fictions by introducing the characters from one of his books into another and that not alone but with their relations and forbears, *avis et proavis*, for some generations. But he did this in such a masterly way and his canvas was so full of life that the repetitions were no more striking than those everyday coincidences that are always occurring in society.

On Mr. Black's narrow yacht-decks it savours of presumptuous laziness to make one of his five principal characters a *revenant* from the gloom of his past novels. But if Queen T. is so obtrusive, what are we to say for the angelic modesty and retiring spirit of her husband? This marvellous nonentity neither speaks nor is spoken to: Apparently he never helps to sail the yacht or row a boat. If he is sick in his cabin all the time he accomplishes his fate noiselessly and with self-effacement. And yet, like the Greek chorus, he is supposed to divulge no inconsiderable part of the narrative, which he does without further betrayal of his existence than is involved in such phrases as this, 'Some of us' objected to such and such tyrannical proceedings of Queen T.,—while we really know all the time that he durst not raise a finger in opposition to that despotic individual. So completely does the reader ignore him that we had quite a difficulty in making out who this strange man could be who persistently appeared in the illustrations!